



'Safe Touch' guidance

CAMUS Productions



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Safeguarding – Safe Touch Guidance



We recognise that appropriate relationships between adults and children or vulnerable adults are essential to promoting safeguarding at CAMUS. This 'safe touch' guidance has been developed to ensure all cast members and volunteers understand their responsibilities regarding appropriate and inappropriate physical contact.

This guidance should be followed as part of the CAMUS Safeguarding Policy

➤ Know what is 'safe touch'

For the purpose of this guidance, 'safe touch' is defined as physical contact that, if otherwise avoided, would be inhumane, unkind or potentially emotionally and/or physically damaging for the child or vulnerable adults. **Safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.**

Examples of 'safe touch' may be:

- comforting an upset or distressed child
- congratulating or praising a child
- holding the hand of a child to guide them, for example, as an entrance to a scene
- giving first aid to a child
- administering medicine
- moving a child out of the way of danger or intervening in a dangerous situation

➤ Reporting inappropriate touch

If a child tries to engage in inappropriate touch with an adult, this should be reported immediately to the DSL in order to prevent any allegations of inappropriate physical contact. If you suspect or witness inappropriate physical contact, this must be reported to the DSL. A written record of all instances of reported inappropriate touch will be kept by the DSL. Any allegations will be dealt with as a **matter of urgency** in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and CAMUS Code of Conduct.

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Certain types of physical contact between adult and child are inappropriate, such as hugging, lap-sitting, holding hands or kissing. It is recognised that appropriate places to touch other people are on the shoulders, arms and back.

It is advised to avoid lone-working at all times to safeguard all parties, but in the event that this is not possible, an open door policy will be adopted in the working space.

➤ The 'Safe Touch' Rule – when is it **ok to touch**?

Touch can be very important if someone needs support and reassurance, but there are times when touch can be wrong, or inappropriate.



for **communication**: touching someone's shoulder to get their attention; when signing with someone who is deaf; shaking hands or giving a 'high five'

emotional or physical **support**: to give reassurance, security and comfort – This includes a hug, or if someone falls and you catch them.



for **protection**: if you need to intervene and manage challenging behaviour or to stop someone in danger



for **first aid**: to ensure someone is medically well or requires treatment



Types of touch that are **not ok**, otherwise known as inappropriate

- Touching **someone's face** without asking: This is quite a personal space and they may not like it.
- A '**front embrace**': this is also known as a 'hug', but we would encourage a 'sideways hug' which would be more appropriate.
- Sitting on **someone else's lap**: You can offer to sit side by side instead.
- Touching someone's **private areas**: This is never ok unless you are doing personal care

If you have physical contact with someone in the list above, then report it as a **neutral notification**. This is to safeguard yourself from any misunderstanding.



➤ Restrictions on 'hugging'

It is suggested that a 'sideways hug' is offered, rather than a 'front embrace'. This type of hug prevents the child from turning themselves towards the adult and thus engaging in what could be deemed as 'inappropriate' physical contact. The **sideways hug** is where the adult places their hands on the child's shoulders or back – as demonstrated above.

➤ Restrictions on 'holding hands'

We understand that, at times, an adult may need to hold a child's hand – either to guide them or prevent them from being physically harmed. Younger children may engage in hand holding as a reassurance or comfort.

➤ Restrictions on 'lap-sitting'

It is understood that instances of 'lap-sitting' are inappropriate and therefore we recommend that if a child requires comfort or reassurance that they should sit sideways or face outwards. The child should never sit in a front embrace.

It is recognised that children do not always understand the boundaries of child / adult physical contact and may engage in lap-sitting, hand-holding or hugging. If any of these occur, the adult should explain to the child why it is unacceptable and encourage them to release their grip.

➤ Reasonable Force

It is understood that, at times, physical intervention may be necessary to prevent a child or adult from being harmed. All adults have the legal power to use reasonable force, and in this instance they must always explain the reasons for their actions and why it was necessary in a **neutral notification** to the Safeguarding Team / DSL.

Reasonable Force may be required in situations such as:

- prevention of harm
- risk of danger
- risk of harm to themselves or another

Legal Framework: Children Act (1987 s47), Protection of Children Act (1999), Data Protection Act (1998), Childcare (Disqualifications) Regulations (2009), Police Act 1987 (Criminal Records) (NO2) Regulations 2009.

Further guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children (revised HMG 2006, March 2013 & March 2015)

Guidance for Safer Work Practices for Adults who work with Children & Young People (2015)

Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges (DfE) (2019)